

11/20/62

I want to take this opportunity to bring the American people up to date on the Cuban crisis -- and to review those understandings between Soviet Chairman Khrushchev and myself, as set forth in our letters of October 27 and 28, which have thus far been partially, but only partially, fulfilled:

-- Chairman Khrushchev, it will be recalled, agreed to remove from Cuba all weapons systems capable of offensive use; to halt the further introduction of such weapons into Cuba; and to permit appropriate United Nations observation and supervision to ensure the carrying out and continuation of these commitments.

-- We on our part agreed that -- once these adequate arrangements for verification had been established -- we would remove our Naval quarantine and give assurances against an invasion of Cuba.

The evidence to date indicates that all known offensive missile sites in Cuba have been dismantled -- the missiles and their associated equipment have been loaded on Soviet ships -- and our inspection at sea of these departing ships has confirmed that the number of missiles reported by the Soviet Union as having been brought into Cuba (which closely corresponded to our own information) has now been removed. In addition, the Soviet Government has stated that all nuclear weapons have been withdrawn from Cuba, and that no offensive weapons will be reintroduced.

These are important steps -- but they are far short of complete fulfillment of the Soviet Union's commitments, and far short of the conditions which my letter made clear must precede our lifting of the quarantine and our assurances against invasion.

-- The Soviets have not yet removed from Cuba the IL-28 bombers which are capable of carrying nuclear destruction to many parts of the Hemisphere.

-- The Cuban Government has not yet permitted the United Nations to verify whether all offensive weapons have been removed and is threatening to fire on unarmed American reconnaissance planes which are conducting aerial verification until adequate international arrangements can be made.

-- Finally, no safeguards have yet been established against the future introduction of offensive weapons back into Cuba.

This Government does not intend to weaken in any way its resolve to eliminate for all time the threat of offensive weapons in Cuba as contemplated in the letters of October 27 and 28. We shall not permit any insertion of new and irrelevant conditions, any undue delay in fulfilling the original commitments, or any interference with our surveillance. A meeting of the Organ of Consultation of the OAS is being called for this week; and we shall be prepared to take whatever action may be required.

During the last three weeks we have temporarily suspended rigid enforcement of the quarantine to facilitate the removal of these weapons and the efforts of the Secretary General -- but that quarantine can be enforced and expanded as required. We have restricted aerial surveillance to the minimum needed to protect hemispheric security in the absence of international inspection -- but we are prepared to enforce that surveillance and respond to any attacks upon our planes as required. The continuing Soviet military presence in Cuba, which now includes large numbers of organized ground combat units -- as well as the events of the last few weeks and months -- make it impossible for this Hemisphere to rely wholly on verbal Soviet assurances as suitable safeguards to our security.

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On the other hand, if Chairman Khrushchev is able to make good his commitments of October 28 -- if all offensive weapons systems are removed from Cuba and kept out of this Hemisphere in the future -- if adequate verification and safeguards can assure peace in the Caribbean -- then there will be no need for continuation of our quarantine and there would be no reason not to reaffirm our earlier pledge -- which is consistent with the Rio Treaty and the Resolution of the 87th Congress -- to "neither initiate nor permit aggression in this Hemisphere", in the absence of other provocation or justification. We cannot, of course, abandon this Hemisphere's political, economic and other efforts to halt Cuban subversion or aggression, or its hopes that the Cuban people will someday be truly free. But, world-wide, this completion of the commitments on both sides, and the achievement of a peaceful solution to this crisis, could surely open the door to further major breakthroughs -- on disarmament, Berlin and other issues -- and, hopefully, to a new era in Soviet-American relations.

May I add this final thought: In this week of Thanksgiving, there is much for which we can be grateful, as we look back to where we stood only four weeks ago: the unity of this Hemisphere, the support of our Allies, and the calm of the American people. It now appears that all of these qualities may ^{soon} ~~be~~ tested again. -- but I am confident that they will once again endure and once again prevail.